basis and whether promotion is also done on the basis of an All India common seniority list for the service/cadre/posts as a whole.

(c) and (d) The above policy of SDA is required to be followed by all Central Government Offices in the North Eastern Region. The payment of this Allowance has been extended to Central Public Sector Undertaking employees as per the rates applicable to Central Government employees working in the North-Eastern States by the PSUs concerned/ Admn. Departments.

(e) and (f) The North Eastern Allowance/Remote Locality Allowance are being paid to all eligible Central Public Sector employees.

Gratuity Limitation

1688. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 4629 dated September 6, 1996 regarding Gratuity ceiling in PSUs and state:

(a) whether the Government have examined the issue of enhancement of gratuity ceiling for employees of Public Sector Undertakings;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons for delay and the time by which the decision is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) to (c) The Government has decided to enhance the maximum amount to gratuity from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2.50 lakhs.

ICICI's Non-Banking Financial Company

1689. SHRI SULTAN SALAHUDDIN OWAISI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether ICICI is going to launch its own non-banking financial company;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the main features of the proposed company;

(c) whether this company is likely to function on the lines of other non-banking instructions;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the areas where this company is likely to give financial assistance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE : (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) ICICI has reported that ICICI Credit Corporation Ltd. (I-Credit) has been incorporated on March 27, 1997 and has obtained the certificate for commencement of business on April 25, 1997.

(b) to (e) I-CREDIT has been formed by ICICI to establish ICICI Group's presence in consumer financing, factoring and hire-purchase and to further ICICI Group's presence in leasing.

Deferment of Investment Proposals

1690. SHRI PRATAP SINGH SAINI : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) the number of meetings of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPS) held since March, 1, 1997;

(b) whether the Ministry concerned sought deferment of any investment proposals falling under the administrative purview of the Ministry at any meeting of the FIPB; and

(c) if so, the financial impact of each such deferral on : (I) the foreign investor and the investment proposal concerned, (II) on the Governments objective of attracting 10 billion US dollars in foreign direct investment?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) During the period from 1.3.1997 to 26.7.1997 twenty meetings of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board have been held.

(b) Consideration of foreign investment propo-sals are sometime deferred at the request of the Administrative Ministries and sometimes due to the rea-sons peculiar to the proposal like lack of information from the applicant companies etc.

(c) The meetings of the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) are held every week and investment proposals are considered in a time schedule to minimise delays.

Technical Development in Industrial Sector

1691. JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA :

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have felt the necessity of research and technical development in the industrial sector to make more competitive in the International Market;

(b) If so, the amount released by the Government to encourage technical development and research during the Eighth Plan period, year-wise;

(c) whether the Government have issued certain directives in regard to technical development in industrial sector;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The amount released year-wise under the Programme Aimed at Technological Self-Reliance (PATSER) Scheme implemented through Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, during the Eighth Five Year Plan is as under :-

Year	(Rs. in cores)
1992-93	1.69
1993-94	2.17
1994-95	6.01
1995-96	3.59
1996-97	6.47
Total	19.93

(c) to (e) Several initiatives have been taken to provide incentives and support measures such as Income Tax Relief on R & D expenditure, Weighted Tax Deducation for Sponsored Research, Customs Duty Exemption to Research Institution, Non-Commercial Scientific and Industrial Research Organisations, Five Year Tax Holiday to Commercial R & D Companies, Excise Duty Waiver, Accelerated Depreciation Allowance, Technology Development Fund, Direct Funding of R & D Projects in Industry by Government Departments, National Awards for R & D for Outstanding Achievements, and Commercialisation of Public Funded R & D.

Demonstration-cum-Training Centre

1692. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Central Silk Board has established a Demonstration-cum-Training Centre at Sualkuchi in Assam to demonstrate the improved silk reeling;

(b) if so, the number of persons trained so far at the said Training Centre; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to make people aware that such a Training Centre is functioning at Sualkuchi?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir. A Demonstration-cum-Training Centre (DCTC) to train silk reelers and reelers-cum-weavers in improved techniques of silk reeling and spinning along with a post-cocoon Technical Service Centre has been established at Sualkuchi.

(b) A total of 351 persons have been trained so far in the improved technologies of silk reeling and spinning at this training centre.

(c) The following steps have been taken by Central Silk Board to ensure that the people are aware of such a training centre at Sualkuchi :-

(i) One large-scale demonstration covering the improved muga silk reeling technology improved technology of weaving, degumming and dyeing and five demonstrations on improved version of tasar and maga reeling machines and improved degumming/dyeing technology and the recipe used for degumming and dyeing were organised in Sualkuchi in March 1997.

(ii) Survey on silk reeling and weaving units by visiting each unit.

(iii) Testing and quality assessment of cocoons and raw silk tendered by reelers and weavers.

All these activities have given wide publicity about the functioning of both the DCTC and post cocoon Technical Service Centre.

Advertisement for VDIS

1693. SHRI PRAKASH VISHWANATH PARANJPE:

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR :

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to launch a high-profile advertisement campaign about the tax amnesty scheme as part of the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme (VDIS) announced in the 1997-98 budget;

(b) if so, whether the publicity campaign for VDIS likely to be assigned to private advertisement agencies; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor alongwith the expenditure proposed to be involved thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir. The government has launched a multimedia publicity campaign for creating greater public awareness on the features and opportunities offered by the Voluntary Disclosure of Income Scheme, 1997.

(b) and (c) The publicity of this Scheme has been entrusted to two leading private agencies after evaluating their technical merit and competence. The multimedia publicity would cover advertisements/publicity through newspapers, TV, magazines, posters, direct malling, tele marketing etc. The total cost of the multimedia publicity would be approximately Rs. 30 Crores.

[Translation]

Development of Tea Gardens

1694. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY :

SHRIMATI PURNIMA VERMA :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :